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"THE OLD RED HOUSE"

The following article is copied from an old issue of the Wayne County Citizen, and was written by a Miss Jennie Skinner. This is the American story of the Land family.

Since Nature has been generous with her gifts of beauty in the Delaware Valley. When the sky is blue and hills are green there can be no more delightful journey than over the road running parallel with the Delaware River.

Any traveller who passes up beyond the little bridge that spans Calkins Creek at Millerville on the way to Damascus cannot fail to be attracted by the quaint old house at the foot of the winding hill.

Our enthusiastic City guests call it "that dear old Colonial house, but we people of Millerville speak of it as familiarly as "the old red house" for since it has been since the earliest recollections of the oldest inhabitants.

It is large, square and roomy, with the front door opening out on the public highway. A large hall extends through the house to the back where the boiler is charged with a panoramic view of the Delaware River, with its beautiful hills and valley.

Standing near like sentinels on guard are tall pine trees, straight and stately as soldiers on duty. The doors are wide and high, some of them parting in the middle horizontally, making it possible for the upper half to swing open while the lower half remains closed. I have often wondered if they were made thus to protect the children from wild animals in the years when the forests were filled with danger.

There are fireplaces, the real genuine articles, where there was warmth and glow, that fill the whole room with light and cheer, and where the mothers and grandmothers prepared food for many hungry children. In the chimney back of the kitchen is a large bake oven which supplied the family with bread.

The old red house is rich in historical lore. If it could speak many an interesting tale it would unfold, of births and deaths and the romance of love and marriage, laughter and tears, and all that made life interesting for many generations.

We have reason to believe this was the first frame dwelling house in Wayne County. The county was organized in 1798, and the house was erected in 1796, the year in 1795. Colonel Skinner said the barn was filled with wheat the first year which proves there was quite a clearing of farm land at that time.

The following was written many years ago by Rev. T. J. Root: "In 1796 John Land, a son-in-law of Admiral Skinner built a large two story house between the Two an farm and hat is now known as Millerville. The house stands today and is in a good state of preservation. It is credited with being the oldest house in Wayne County. It was built down through a succession of Skinner ownerships reaching from Nathan Skinner, who built it from his brother-in-law John Land, to his grand-daughter, Miss Mary Skinner, who married Chas. W. Beach. A sister of Mrs. Beach, Mrs. Helen Dexter and her family occupy the house at the present time.

After the building at Damascus was burned on May 28th, 1888 in which the St Tammany Lodge No. 83 held its communications. At the Session of the Grand Lodge in the June following a new warrant was issued and authority granted the officers to remove the Lodge to Millerville and to locate it in the third story of the old red house owned by Nathan Skinner, who was then and has been for several years the Master. In that ancient mansion, carefully preserved, can be seen an article of furniture once in use by St Tammany Lodge. It is the Pillar of the Senior Warden and it is the only relic of that Lodge now known to exist. Reuben Skinner was the first Master and Colonel Skinner was the last, succeeding Nathan his father. Colonel Skinner was the last surviving member of the St Tammany Lodge. He died in 1889 aged 90 years. The above concerning the Lodge was written by C. T. Curtis.)

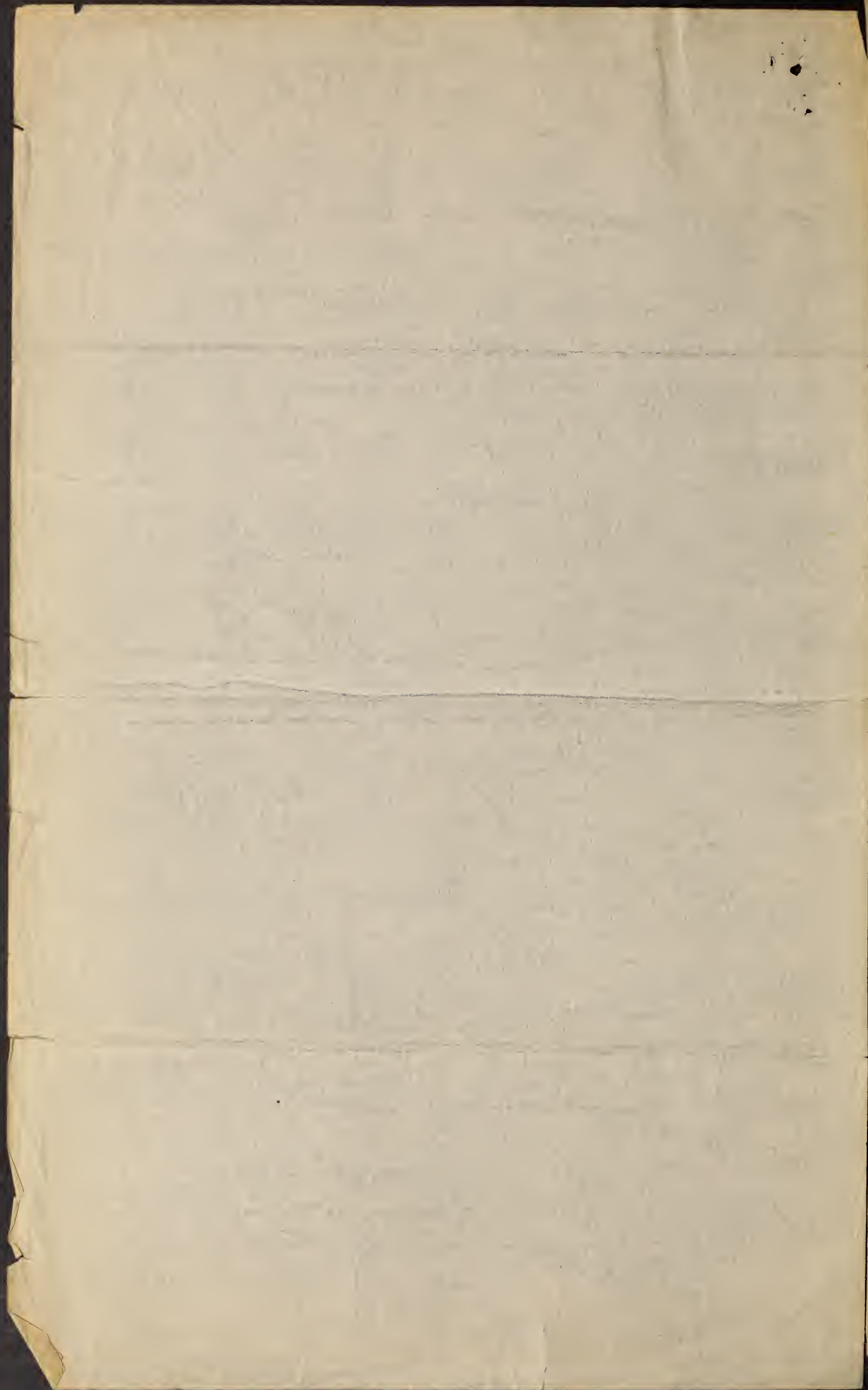
It is in keeping with the story of the old red house to give a sketch of its twin house across the river on the farm now owned by L. M. Skinner. This house was built in 1794 by Thomas Bush who was a carpenter for his own home and in Bush did the carpenter work on the house and barn for John Land. It was thought a frame house could not be constructed, therefore it was considered a great undertaking. The beams and sills were hewed out with an axe, but the other timber was sawed in a mill.

Mr Bush's house was located very near where Bryant Kane's log cabin stood at the time the Indians massacred his whole family. Michael S. Smith and William Smith lived farther up the river.

It is necessary to recall the events of a generation before this to understand the historical value and exact location of early acts of interest that transpired in this old homestead.

One of the earliest settlers was an Englishman by the name of Robert Land, who was commissioned Justice of the Peace under the British Government. The log cabin at furnished a home for his family was just below the old red house.

In the Spring of 1777, while Mr Land was absent from home, the news was conveyed to Mrs Land that the Indians were coming up the River, the Mohawks, and as no harm would come to her family, she thought they were after the cattle, and in order to keep them safe, she, with her three months old babe, and her oldest son John, then 15 years of age, drove their cattle to a thicket in the wilderness to hide them, leaving four children at home; Abel 17, Rebecca 15, Phoebe 13 and Robert 10. The children of the early settlers at home were brave and fearless for they slept the sleep of the just.



Some time during the night Rebecca was awakened by an Indian drawing the point of his spear across her foot. A friendly Indian by the name of Captain John often visited their home, playing with and teasing the children. When she opened her eyes, she beheld the savage. Her confidence and innocence touched his heart. He told her that he was a Mohawk and that his people had come to drive the settlers out of the country. He bade her arise and flee quickly and he and some of the neighbors so that there might be no unnecessary bloodshed. And Rebecca, the 15 year old daughter of Robert Land went swiftly to the river and into the canoe and hastened up the hill to warn the whole family of the threatened danger. She soon discovered her warning had come too late, but the heroic girl did not forget her mission. She hastened to the homes of Nicholas Corbin and Nathan Mitchell where she remained until morning. Then the alarmed families formed a little band and went to Land's home to investigate, they found the whole family murdered and spoiled. All were dead except a little girl who was still alive in the bushes under the bleeding rock by the spring. From here they accompanied Rebecca home where they found everything undisturbed but the younger children told them how the Indians had been there and taken their brother Abel and gone they knew not where.

About this time a band of friendly Ojibwa Indians came to Mr Land's home saying they had met the Mohawks up Calkins creek and had all their respective property induced them to permit Abel to return home, but all they could say was of no avail.

While they were talking Mrs Land and John returned. John and the Ojibwa Indians, together with all the whites they could muster immediately went in pursuit of the Mohawks, overtaking them at Oghwaga.

After much arguing the Mohawks agreed to let Abel come home if he would run the gauntlet. He submitted to their barbarous treatment and ran so swiftly that he escaped with very little injury, and the happy boy returned with his friends to the Delaware.

After the rumbling of the Revolution had taken a colder note, the Lands, being considered Tories, they were subjected to many indignities and much abuse, and although John was not much more than a boy, he was cruelly treated many times. Finally the family of Robert Land went to New York and then to Canada, where they became influential citizens, with the exception of John, who seemed to have inherited a love for the Delaware Valley.

After the clouds of the Revolution had broken, and the sun began to shine again, not only on God's green fields but also in the hearts of men, John Land decided to take up the old homestead and become a citizen of the Colonies. He applied to the Governor for warrant No. 172 containing 435 acres. It commenced at the big rock in the eddy at Skinner's Falls and reached back in the country around Millerville, enveloping the whole place known by that name.

As John Furber, who was John Land's daughter, said she had heard her father tell many times that he caught enough beaver in a few months after the Revolutionary War to pay for his 435 acres of land which he immediately began to clear and improve.

After the mills built by Timothy Skinner and Simon Calkins were burned by the Indians, the second mill was built by John Land, down near the Millerville Bridge. In connection with the mill he constructed a dam across Calkins Creek, a half mile above the mill, and dug a canal or race from the dam to the mill.

The digging was nearly all done by one man a Mr Summersfield, and it was no small amount of work, as it was 12 feet deep in places, and the earth was all thrown out with a shovel, it being even before wheel-barrow were in use. Part of the raceway is now the main road leading to the river.

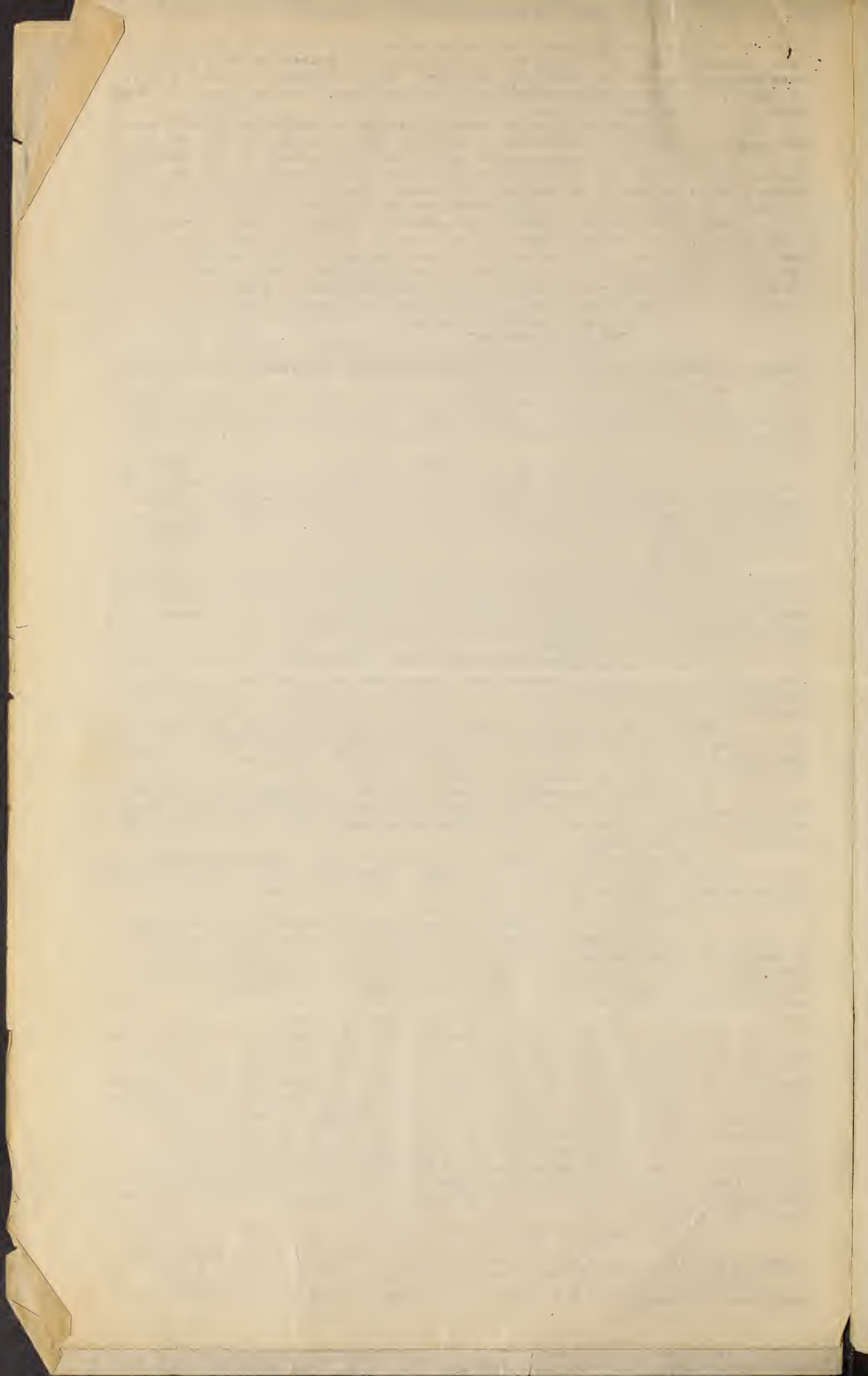
The project was a failure. The canal was partly through quicksand, and it was continually washing out and breaking away. After a few years of this discouraging work, he moved the mill back from the river on the site where the post office is today. This mill was in operation more than 100 years.

Mr Land was a tall, muscular man, of great endurance and very ambitious. One day he had the misfortune to break the mill crank, which was a very necessary piece of machinery. Slocum Hollow (Scranton) was the nearest place that another could be procured. He saddled his horse and rode to Scranton where he purchased the desired article, fastened it on the horse's back and started for home. He walked the entire distance, leading the horse, there being only a bridle path through the unbroken wilderness.

He married Lillis, the eldest daughter of Daniel Skinner, and 11 children were born unto them. One son died in California and two went to Canada. The children who remained in Wayne county were Lillis, wife of Dr William Allen; Rhoda, wife of Luther Appley, who studied medicine under Doctor Allen, and became a noted physician. He travelled up and down the Delaware Valley for many years, usually carrying his medicine and instruments in saddle bags on the back of his horse. Dr Appley enjoyed his first home after marriage in the old Red House, and his eldest son William was born there.

Dr Luther had four sons; William, Theron, Luther and Mark. William and Theron were both widely known physicians. Dr William was appointed surgeon for the Erie Railroad Company and his practice extended from Hancock to Lackawanna, while Dr Theron visited the homes of the ill and suffering north, south, east and west in a radius of many miles.

Maxmilla became the wife of John Furber one of the prominent men of his time. Thy, everybody in this whole country knew and honored Uncle John Furber. They were the parents of ten children. His son Joseph and Luther Appley are the only surviving grand children of John Land in this section of country. Maxmilla married



Jesse Calkin of Ashland. She seemed to have gained much medical knowledge; and as doctors were far separated, roads poor and travelling slow, she was an angel of mercy in the homes of the scattered settlement. One daughter married James Loudon of Honesdale.

In 1813 John Land sold the old homestead to his brother-in law Nathan Skinner, for \$10,000 and purchased a tract of land at Ashland known as Stanton Corners.

Nathan Skinner and his family occupied the house until all his children were grown and married and his descendants have occupied it until the present time. Nathan Skinner was a surveyor, and he wrote an unpublished history of the Upper Delaware, which has been the foundation for all local historians until the present time.

Nathan Skinner and his family, John Land, his children and grand children, with the before mentioned exception, have all passed away. The great grand children are the older people of today; and the fourth generation has children learning knowledge in the schools of life, while the Old Red House stands sturdy and strong, and can stand a while for a few more generations before it will have outlived its usefulness. It reminds me of the song of the brook

"Men may come and men may go
But I go on forever"

Note Coshutunk is the Indian name for Cochecton, meaning "low lands"

